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Growing Up With Grains

Dietary Guidelines Affect Various Ages Differently

The new Dietary Guidelines urge most Americans to eat less calories, be more active, and make wiser food choices. The guidelines also focus on specific recommendations for different age and gender groups and activity levels. Based on those factors, the recommended ounces of grains per day can vary dramatically. Here is a quick look at some of those variances:

- Five-year-old, male or female, more than 60 minutes physical activity per day — 5 ounces of grains daily
- 18-year-old male, more than 60 minutes physical activity per day — 10 ounces of grains daily
- 18-year-old female, more than 60 minutes physical activity per day — 8 ounces of grains daily
- 35-year-old, male, 30 to 60 minutes physical activity per day — 9 ounces of grains daily
- 35-year-old, female, 30 to 60 minutes physical activity per day — 6 ounces of grains daily
- 55-year-old, female, less than 30 minutes physical activity per day — 5 ounces of grains daily
- 55-year-old, male, less than 30 minutes physical activity per day — 7 ounces of grains daily

Go to www.mypyramid.gov to find out how many ounces of grain foods you and your family need each day.

Despite the individualization of the new Dietary Guidelines, there are some messages that apply to everyone. The guidelines suggest eating whole grain products often; at least half of all grains eaten should be whole grains. This applies even to children and adolescents. If your kids are white bread lovers, try introducing them to whole wheat bread slowly by making your sandwiches with one slice of enriched white bread and one slice of whole wheat bread. Find out if a product contains whole grains by reading the label. Choose foods that name a whole grain ingredient first on the label's ingredient list. Whole grain ingredients include whole wheat, bulgur, graham flour, oatmeal, whole grain corn, brown rice, or wild rice.

The guidelines also stress the importance of grains in providing many nutrients, including dietary fiber, several B vitamins, and minerals. Women of childbearing age especially are encouraged to consume grains fortified with the B vitamin folate before and during pregnancy to help prevent neural tube defects during fetal development. Iron is an important mineral often lacking in teenage girls and women in their childbearing years. Consuming whole and enriched grain products is an easy way to get more iron.

Grains are an essential part of a healthy diet for people of all ages. The amount of grains we need on a daily basis may change as we age, but grains will always remain a necessary component of a balanced meal and a great source of vitamins and minerals.